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DONALD TRUMP

VLADIMIR PUTIN

DON SAYS HE SPOKE WITH PUTIN ABOUT ENDING WAR IN UKRAINE

US President Donald Trump said he spoke to his Russian counterpart to try to negotiate an end to the war ahead of its third anniversary. Trump told the New York Post he believes Vladimir Putin "does care" about battlefield deaths. "All those dead people. They're like your kids, two million of them – and for no reason," Trump said, adding Putin too wants to "see people stop dying". Asked how many times he has spoken to Putin after taking office on January 20, Trump said he better not say.

Manipur CM resigns hours after meeting Shah

Speaker Satyabrata Singh, minister Y Khemchand among frontrunners for CM's post

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR & RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR
@ Guwahati / New Delhi

MANIPUR Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh resigned on Sunday, a day before the start of the crucial Assembly session in which he was to face a no-confidence motion.

Singh submitted his resignation to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla in Imphal on Sunday evening, shortly after returning from Delhi where he met Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The governor asked him to continue in office till alternative arrangements are made, the Raj Bhavan said.

The names of Assembly speaker T Satyabrata Singh and senior minister Y Khemchand are doing the rounds as Singh's possible successor.

According to sources, it is BJP's internal politics that forced Biren Singh to resign nearly two years after the state was torn by an ethnic conflict between Meiteis and Kukis that left over 250 people dead and 60,000 others displaced.

Biren Singh hands over his resignation to Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, in the presence of BJP's Northeast in-charge Sambit Patra and other leaders | AM

Before his Delhi trip on Saturday evening, Singh had called a meeting with NDA MLAs. Only 20 of the 46 MLAs turned up. The 60-member House now has an effective strength of 59.

Singh wanted to see how many MLAs were with him given that many of the BJP's 37 legislators, including five who defected from JD(U), were demanding a leadership change.

Two days ago, the Congress announced its plan to move a no-confidence motion against the government. The Congress, which has five MLAs, was hoping to get the support of the BJP rebels to take the number beyond 10 as required for the no-trust motion to stand.

Sources said the BJP's central leadership did not want to risk an embarrassing situation where the disgruntled MLAs might side with the Congress, and so it asked Singh to quit.

The 'leaked audio tapes', in which a person taking credit for the ethnic violence, may also have worked against Singh as a forensic analysis showed a 93% probability that the voice samples were Singh's. The matter is in the Supreme Court.

The BJP was under tremendous pressure from the party's Manipur MLAs to remove Singh.

Sources said the leadership was growing impatient with Singh as the ethnic violence had begun to tarnish Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reputation for good governance.

Aero India a platform to showcase India's defence might, says Rajnath

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

CALLING Aero India an important platform to showcase India's strength and vision of becoming a self-reliant and secure nation, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Sunday that the event will promote global partnerships and align with India's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' initiatives. He was speaking at a press conference on the eve of the event.

Themed around 'The Runway to a Billion Opportunities', Aero India 2025, set to begin on Monday and last till February 15, will highlight India's latest aerospace advancements, indigenous innovations and new products from global aerospace companies.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the curtain raiser for Aero India 2025 in Bengaluru on Sunday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

"Aero India 2025 has surpassed all expectations, with over 900 exhibitors, including 150 international companies, and participation from more than 90 countries," Singh pointed out. The presence of defence ministers from 30 countries and air chiefs from 43 nations shows the importance of the event for both India and the global defence community, he added.

This year, the event will cover 42,000 square metres (up from 35,000 sqm last edition - 2023) and feature over 70 flying displays and 30 static displays. "One of the biggest attractions will be the participation of two advanced fifth-generation fighter jets – Russia's Su-57 and the US' F-35 Lightning II. This is the first time these jets will be displayed together, offering a unique chance to compare Eastern and Western fighter technology," he said.

'FELON' LIGHTS UP CITY SKIES: P2

31 Maoists, 2 cops killed in Ch'garh

EJAZ KAISER @ Raipur

AT least 31 Maoists, including 11 women, were killed in a fierce gun battle with security forces in the Indravati National Park region of Bijapur in Chhattisgarh on Sunday.

The encounter, which took place 450 km south of Raipur, resulted in the deaths of two security personnel and injured two others.

Bastar range IG Sunderraj P said troops recovered 31 bodies, which are yet to identified. The injured personnel were airlifted to Raipur, where doctors reported signs of bullet injuries and fractures. Doctors said they'll have to wait for 24 hours for further updates.

The operation was launched based on specific intelligence inputs, with a joint team of security forces comprising the District Reserve Guard (DRG), Special Task Force (STF) and Bastar Fighters, all units of the state police, tracking real-time locations of the Maoists for more than five days.

Security forces crossed hilly terrain before launching a massive offensive from different directions, surrounding the Maoists in the Annapur forest in the core national park, some 90 km away from the Bijapur district headquarters, on Sunday.

The forces recovered AK-47 rifles, self-loading rifles, INSAS assault rifles and grenade launchers from the encounter location.

This year, 81 Maoists have been killed in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh.

EXPRESS READ

Ed Sheeran's street gig cut short by city police

Bengaluru: British singer Ed Sheeran's impromptu performance at Church Street on Sunday was cut short by the police citing lack of permission | CITY EXPRESS: P1

Tourist bus catches fire on Expressway

Mysuru: A tourist bus caught fire on the Mysuru-Bengaluru Expressway in Mandya on Sunday. All the 20 passengers onboard the bus managed to escape | P5

Delhi govt to be sworn in after PM returns from US

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR
@ New Delhi

THE BJP government in Delhi will be sworn in once Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns from his visit to France and the United States.

Modi will leave for France on Monday, and from there, he will travel to the US, where he is scheduled to meet President Donald Trump. Modi will return to India on Thursday.

Sources indicated that the swearing-in ceremony will be a grand event aimed at showcasing the unity within the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The chief ministers of all BJP and NDA-ruled states are expected to attend.

On Sunday, BJP president J P Nadda met Union Home Minister Amit Shah to expedite the government formation process. Speculation is rife regarding the next Delhi chief minister. Several names are being discussed, including Delhi MLA Parvesh Verma, BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj, and party leaders such as Vijender Gupta, Rekha Gupta, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Satish Upadhyay, Manoj Tiwari, and Mohan Singh Bisht. Verma and Rekha Gupta are considered to be the frontrunners.

EXPRESS INTAKE

e-air taxi promises to change urban transportation | P2

Commuters launch campaign against Metro fare hike | P5

Rlys explores N-power option to cut fossil fuel usage | P9

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